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SECURITY INFORMATION
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

REPORT

CD NO.

COUNTRY Bulgaria

DATE OF INFORMATION 1952

SUBJECT Political - Trials, prison camp conditions

DATE DIST. *3 Sept* 1953

NO. OF PAGES 3

SUPPLEMENT TO REPORT NO.

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THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

CONDITIONS IN BELKE PRISON CAMP;
SENTENCING OF ATANAS BUNOV AND OTHERS IN BULGARIA

All the prisoners in the Belene concentration and forced labor camp recently received from the camp administration formal sentences passed against them by tribunals of the country, in most cases by the tribunal of the locality where each lived before internment.

These sentences range from two to seven years' detention. It appears that the only reason behind this formality is the legalisation of the sentences already pronounced against the prisoners by the administration.

In fact, each person sent to the Belene camp, upon arrival at Camp No 1 (reception center), must sign a document stating that he has been informed of the "reeducation" for which he has been interned. The internment, which is for 1, 3, 5, or 7 years, may be increased after the expiration of the initial period.

These sentences are based on various laws, but especially on the "defense of peace" and "illegal handling of foreign currency" laws, which open so many possibilities to a directed justice.

The trials were held in absentia; none of the prisoners had been called to attend the hearing and none had received a copy of the charge. The victims, therefore, became aware of their lot only when the sentences were handed over to them.

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These sentences do not recognize time already served; they were effective as of the date on which they were handed over to the prisoners. At the Belene Camp, there are some thousands of prisoners who have been detained since 9 September 1944.

Moreover, life in that camp goes from bad to worse, the regime becoming more severe with the betterment of the means of torture applied there. Hunger and cold are the two worst enemies of the prisoners, especially of those in camp No 2, where in winter, spring, and fall there are some 30 centimeters of water under the boards which they use as beds.

The prisoners may receive 10 kilograms of parcels from their families and only one letter each month, 2 months, 3 months, or 4 months, depending on the length of their sentence. If parcels arrive more often than prescribed by the regulations, they are confiscated by the administration. Often, when these parcels contain food that may spoil, they are sold directly on the market of the village of Belene or of Svishtov.

The camp militia recently forced all the prisoners to contribute to the "Peoples' Militia fund." Those who had no money had to write to their families for money. The inmates also had to contribute to the latest Bulgarian National Loan.

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Recently, a physician answering an emergency call to treat a member of the administration of the Belene concentration and forced labor camp had an opportunity to observe the life led by the unfortunate prisoners in the camp. He was amazed at the extreme misery in which the prisoners must live and work.

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The sanitary conditions are deplorable, and the prisoners, who number probably not more than 5,000-6,000 persons, wear rags and look like corpses. The food is foul, and is insufficient for the exhausting physical labor which the prisoners must perform.

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Atanas Burov, eminent Bulgarian politician and statesman prior to 9 September 1944, who was arrested by the militia more than 10 years ago for preliminary investigation, has recently been sentenced to 20 years in jail following a trial behind closed doors.

Burov, who is said to have been very calm in court, denied charges of espionage for England, France, and the US which had been filed against him.

After 1934, Burov, a former People's Party leader with democratic tendencies, joined the ranks of the Democratic Party of the late Nikola Mushanov.

Many times deputy and minister, he served in the government for the last time as a member of the Muraviev Cabinet (2 - 9 September 1944), which was overthrown by the coup d'etat which put the Communists in power. In this cabinet, Atanas Burov was Minister of Foreign Affairs.

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